

VZCZCXRO9501
OO RUEHCN RUEHGH RUEHVC
DE RUEHBJ #1643/01 1190909
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 280909Z APR 08
FM AMEMBASSY BEIJING
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6938
INFO RUEHOO/CHINA POSTS COLLECTIVE
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 0369
RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ASTANA 0062
RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK 1332
RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 6691
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH 0618
RUEHNT/AMEMBASSY TASHKENT 1169

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIJING 001643

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/28/2033
TAGS: [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KIRF](#) [TI](#) [PK](#) [KG](#) [AF](#) [KZ](#) [CH](#)
SUBJECT: HIZB UT-TAHRIR, MUSLIM MISSIONARIES AND ISLAMIC
RESURGENCE IN WESTERN CHINA

REF: A. 2007 BEIJING 7329
[1](#)B. 2007 BEIJING 7330
[1](#)C. OSC/FBIS CPP20080404136002
[1](#)D. 2007 BEIJING 6233

Classified By: Deputy Political Section Chief Ben Moeling. Reasons 1.4
(b/d).

Summary

[1](#)1. (C) Counterterrorism experts at the Ministry of State Security-affiliated China Institutes for Contemporary International Relations (CICIR) described to PolOffs on April 15 an ongoing Islamic "resurgence" in western China, encouraged by rising wealth among Chinese Muslims and increasing contacts with foreign Muslims through foreign missionary work, Hajj travel and study abroad. The spread of the Wahhabist Salafiyya movement among western China's Hui Muslims has so far not conflicted with Chinese Government interests, but local, more mainstream Muslims of the Qadim and Ikhwan sects generally oppose the movement. The spread of Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami, a fundamentalist group known in Mandarin as "Yi Zha Bu Te" or "Yisilan Jiefang Dang" which promotes the establishment of an Islamic Caliphate, generally remains confined to Xinjiang, according to CICIR experts. An Urumqi-based academic told PolOffs that Xinjiang authorities have not figured out how to control the spread of Hizb ut-Tahrir, which targets well-educated Muslims and whose propaganda is available at street stalls and bookstores in Uighur neighborhoods of Urumqi. Hizb ut-Tahrir is "really giving the Government a headache," he added, surmising that the movement's "ideological strength" is too strong. End Summary.

Scholars: Islamic Rebirth, Increasing Foreign Contact

[1](#)2. (C) Counterterrorism expert Fang Jinying (strictly protect) at the Ministry of State Security-sponsored think tank China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR) described to PolOffs what she views as an Islamic revival in western China. She feels the revival is part of a global trend which swept across other Muslim regions of the world three decades ago, but is just now reaching China after being thwarted by the strict prohibitions on religion during the Cultural Revolution. She added that the religious resurgence is not limited to Islam; participation in Christianity and Buddhism is also currently on the rise.

[1](#)3. (C) According to Fang, the influx of Muslim missionaries

and rise in foreign contact as a result of China's increased openness to the outside world and globalization have contributed to this rebirth. Missionaries from Jamaat Tablighi, an international Islamic missionary organization founded in India in 1926, have recently been traveling to predominantly Hui Muslim areas of western China, such as Ningxia, Gansu and Qinghai to revive religious fervor, said Fang. Fang and her colleague, Xu Feibiao (strictly protect), said missionaries focus their efforts on personal relationships, engaging people in mosques and Muslim neighborhoods. A common approach is to organize and attend studies or discussion groups after mosque services. Xu also noted that Internet access to international Islamic websites, as well as the increased interaction with foreign Muslims of all kinds, have strengthened Islam in China.

¶4. (C) Fang highlighted rising wealth stemming from economic development in Muslim communities as another factor in the resurgence of Islamic beliefs in China (ref A). Economic development has given more Muslims opportunities to travel abroad, whether through work, study in Muslim countries (increasingly common) or the Hajj pilgrimage. Consequently, there are more and more opportunities for establishing personal and institutional relationships with foreign Muslims (ref B). Fang pointed to the spread of the Wahhabist Salafiyya movement in western China as an example of increasing foreign influence, in this case as a result of students and pilgrims returning from Saudi Arabia.

¶5. (C) Though Xu told PolOffs that the rising prevalence of Salafiyyas in western China is opposed by Hui Muslim followers of the more common Qadim and Ikhwan denominations, Fang said the Central Government has not attempted to

BEIJING 00001643 002 OF 002

restrict the Salafiyya movement. She observed that the movement is an "evolution of customs" resulting from growing interaction with the outside world and subsequent social changes. So far, Fang said, Salafiyya activities have not violated any laws. However, she admitted her concern that the increasing religiosity among Chinese Muslims could ultimately cause conflict between rival Chinese Muslim sects.

Experts Still in the Dark on Hizb ut-Tahrir

¶6. (C) Unlike Salafiyya, Fang says the tenets of Hizb ut-Tahrir, a group which she claims is spreading in Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, conflict with Chinese law. For example, she told PolOffs that the group's intention to establish an Islamic Caliphate constitutes a plan to overthrow the state. Fang, who is currently researching Hizb ut-Tahrir's structure and activities both in China and abroad for a book on international extremism, said that the movement is primarily intellectual and targets university-educated Muslims. Xu said that "open source materials" show that many Hizb ut-Tahrir members in Xinjiang have "good jobs," such as university professorships. Fang said that, in other countries, Hizb ut-Tahrir recruiters first target society's "elite," including government officials and law enforcement officers. Second, they seek followers from university students and professors, before finally turning toward the "middle class."

¶7. (C) Uighur Sufis have also served as ripe recruits, in part because the original founder of Hizb ut-Tahrir was a Sufi, Fang claimed. She added that Internet access and the fact that there are many ethnic Uighurs in Central Asian countries, where Hizb ut-Tahrir has a significant following, make it more difficult to control the influx of radical influences. Asked what measures the Central Government is taking to halt the spread of Hizb ut-Tahrir, Fang replied that "this is why we are researching the topic."

XUAR Claims Hizb ut-Tahrir-led Protests, Experts Uninformed

18. (C) State-controlled media reported that three "illegal demonstration activities organized by Hizb ut-Tahrir" took place on March 23 in the southern Xinjiang city of Hotan (also known as "Khotan" or "Hetian") (ref C). The article claimed that Hizb ut-Tahrir also distributed "reactionary leaflets and posters" in Urumqi and Kizilsu Kyrgyz Autonomous Prefecture (west of Kasghar), as well as in Hotan, in an attempt to "instigate" such demonstrations. When asked about the report, CICIR's Fang told PolOffs that they know no details about the demonstrations, and that they need to go do an on-site evaluation themselves. If the protests were indeed organized by Hizb ut-Tahrir, Fang said, such a demonstration would be "a first" for their operations in China. (NOTE: Foreign media report that frustration over an alleged ban on headscarves worn by Muslim women and indignation over the death in custody of a wealthy Uighur businessman sparked the Hotan demonstrations.)

Urumqi-based Academic: A "Headache" for the Government

19. (C) Mulati Heiniyati (strictly protect), an ethnic Kazakh scholar in the Xinjiang Academy of Social Sciences (XJASS) Institute of Religions, told PolOffs that Xinjiang authorities have not figured out how to control the spread of Hizb ut-Tahrir. Hizb ut-Tahrir is "really giving the Government a headache," he added, surmising that the movement's "ideological strength" may be too strong for the Central Government to stop. Heiniyati agreed that this segment of society threatens social stability and may offer fertile ground for groups like Hizb ut-Tahrir to take root. (NOTE: XJASS counterterrorism expert Ma Pinyan (strictly protect) told PolOff in August 2007 that Hizb ut-Tahrir specifically targets unemployed university graduates among other disaffected groups (ref D).)

PICCUTA